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Viewing cable 08PORTAUPRINCE175, FANMI LAVALAS SENATOR: ELECTIONS EDGING TOWARDS

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#08PORTAUPRINCE175.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08PORTAUPRINCE175	2008-02-07 18:13	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Port Au Prince

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000175

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/07/2018

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SUBJECT: FANMI LAVALAS SENATOR: ELECTIONS EDGING TOWARDS
THE END OF 2008

REF: A. PORT AU PRINCE 00106

[B](#). PORT AU PRINCE 00134

[C](#). PORT AU PRINCE 00091

PORT AU PR 00000175 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Fanmi Lavalas Senator from the West Department Rudy Heriveaux told the Ambassador he supports President Preval and his efforts for the political stabilization of Haiti, wants to attract foreign investment, supports reforming the constitution according to the constitution's own procedures, will try to keep planned Lavalas anti-government protests within bounds, and believes Senate elections will be delayed possibly until the end of the year. Heriveaux's support for the Preval administration and political stability is not widely shared by party grass roots. Despite this tension, Heriveaux is regarded within the party as the foremost Fanmi Lavalas politician in Haiti. END SUMMARY.

SENATE'S PRIORITIES

[1](#)2. (SBU) Fanmi Lavalas (FL) Senator (and self-proclaimed leader of FL in Haiti) Rudy Heriveaux, attended a January 25 breakfast hosted by the Ambassador at her residence. Senator Heriveaux identified the Senate's highest priorities for 2008 as the Senate elections, the economy, followed by the "Patrimony Bill" (Note: Law imposing an asset declaration requirement on ranking government officials. End note.), the revised budget and the revitalization of the judicial system. Heriveaux commended the compromise reached with President Preval allowing the ten two-year senators to remain in office (Ref A) and cited it as proof of President Preval's willingness to work with the legislature.

SENATE ELECTIONS

[1](#)3. (SBU) Heriveaux doubted Senate elections would be held by May 8, predicting instead they would be held as late as the end of 2008. He claimed that discord within the CEP over the revision of the CEP's by-laws had delayed work on the electoral law. Heriveaux further opined that Haiti suffers from a plethora of elections, which only a constitutional amendment can remedy. Ambassador counseled Heriveaux to reach out to his Senate colleagues and party Leaders to bring home the fact that timely and successful elections were in Haiti's national interest.

SUPPORT FOR PREVAL GOVERNMENT

[1](#)4. (C) Heriveaux said his party, Fanmi Lavalas, supports Jacques Edouard Alexis as Prime Minister and recognizes the need to support the Preval government in order to have a role in the political process. This government's efforts to solidify security and political stability were fundamentally in Haiti's best interest. He lamented, however, that President Preval had not reciprocated this support by appointing Fanmi Lavalas members, if not to cabinet minister posts, at least to Director General positions in one or more ministries. He suggested the Ambassador might bring this idea up with President Preval. Asked about announcements by Fanmi Lavalas grass roots organizations that large anti-government demonstrations would occur after Carnival,

Heriveaux said he would try to make sure that these remained peaceful and did not slip into radicalism.

ECONOMY

¶5. (SBU) Heriveaux lamented that Haiti's positive macroeconomic performance and responsible fiscal policy had not produced effects felt by the average citizen. He agreed with the economic issues raised by President Preval during his State of the Union address January 14 at the opening session of the National Assembly (Ref C). Heriveaux said that cost of living, unemployment, and lack of foreign investment required immediate attention. The rising cost of living impeded the development of an educated work force, since newly married young couples cannot afford housing despite being employed. Heriveaux said the Senate should raise the minimum wage, last set five years ago at 70 Haitian Gourdes (USD 1.93) per day. Although he agreed with President Preval's call for an increase in the minimum wage in the private sector, he cautioned that it should not be raised so high as to deter investment.

¶6. (SBU) Heriveaux also called attention to the intricate GOH procedures that slowed disbursement of state funds for development projects as a significant impediment to economic progress. Delays in disbursements, Heriveaux claimed, accounted for part of the GoH budget funds left unspent in fiscal year 2007. Heriveaux also stressed the continuing importance of domestic security and stimulating "national production."

¶7. (SBU) Ambassador conceded that corruption remained a huge problem and a significant impediment to investment. It had displaced security as the first preoccupation of potential investors. Heriveaux applauded the GoH's customs and tax department's progress in weeding out corruption.

AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

¶8. (SBU) Heriveaux stated he would support amendments to the constitution if it were the will of a parliamentary majority and conducted according to the constitution's own procedures. Issues requiring constitutional amendment were: 1) allowing double nationality; 2) consolidating the electoral calendar to eliminate Haiti's all-too-frequent elections; 3) reducing the complexity of the current system of multi-layered local government; and, 4) the army. (Note: Heriveaux conceded that the need for an army would be obviated if the Haitian National Police is reinforced. End note.) The dual nationality has recently come into the political spotlight because the newly-elected Vice President of the Senate, Rudy Boulos (Fusion, Northeast) was recently revealed to hold U.S. and Haitian nationality. Heriveaux claimed some Senators throwing accusations at Boulos are themselves dual nationals. (Note: On January 22, the Senate formed a Commission to investigate the dual citizenship of members of Parliament and other high-ranking GoH officials. End note.)

COMMENT

¶9. (SBU) Senator Heriveaux's moderation in front of the Ambassador was no doubt in part motivated by the desire to convince the USG that Fanmi Lavalas is a responsible political actor that deserves inclusion in the government. Heriveaux's moderation in private does not always square with his public political behavior - as in the vituperation he hurled at outgoing Senate President Lambert over the issue of electing a new Senate President and Bureau at the beginning of the current legislative session (Ref A). Senator Heriveaux is undeniably the most prominent FL representative in the legislature, which reinforces his informal claim to the status of senior leader of the FL party in Haiti. Despite his broad political visibility and Fanmi Lavalas' recognition of the utility of having Heriveaux as their national representative, Heriveaux's political moderation is

not widely shared by Fanmi Lavalas militants. Outside of Port au Prince and the West Department, Heriveaux remains a peripheral figure, and Fanmi Lavalas supporters there gravitate to more militant Fanmi Lavalas representatives. Post will monitor whether Heriveaux intervenes if FL grass roots protests become unruly.

SANDERSON